The opposite could well be demonstrated but in order not to stray from these my Indians, let me say that I have seen proof positive of conjugal love among polygamists.

We had on board an Indian with his young and beautiful partner, whom he loved and adored as though she were a representation of the Virgin.

In that business of the Indian who was bitten by a snake and whom we treated, his wife came to him immediately and cared for him for twenty days without ever leaving his side.

Chief Pascual, whose wife was captured and carried off in a surprise raid -- she being old and ugly --, organized an invasion, tracked down the attackers, fought like a lion and rescued his partner from the hands of the enemy. These are facts which happened in a short time while I was present in that area.

When an Indian puts in an appearance and asks for something, he never forgets his children, his wife or his relatives: when he receives anything capable of being divided up, he distributes it, not only to the above but also to his companions.

I have also noticed that mothers are always extraordinarily loving with their children; and have noted that the inter-tribal wars and the mass killings of the inhabitants of a given village are always motivated by the need to avenge offences offered against compatriots or relatives. And if this does not reflect loving concern, what does?

[218] They are cruel, but only regarding prisoners of war whom they condemn to death. We are hardly in a condition to judge them for this cruelty since we did ourselves do the very same until recently; put it into wholesale practice against the Indians themselves during the period of conquest, and continue to do so against them even now when we can do it with impunity.

Among the Indians this custom of killing prisoners is necessary for their personal security in the nomadic life they lead in which they are continually exposed to surprise attacks, and it furthermore frees them from the shame of slavery, an unknown phenomenon amongst them. (1) Looked at from another point

1. This does not agree with what is recounted about the Mbayas and other tribes, who, as report has it, have slaves. (Ed.)